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ABSTRACT

The Internal Bureau of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) has provided educational development services for Third World countries since 1978. The majority of the individuals who come to Canada to participate in the International Bureau's training programs are faculty members who wish to upgrade their technical and pedagogical skills or learn new skills. These training programs tend to emphasize practical experience, though functional aspects of teaching and curriculum development complement the skill training. The programs, which are generally sponsored by the ACCC or a private consulting firm, use a variety of instructional methods and may last for one day to a year. Designing programs for overseas trainees involves: (1) the establishment of clear objectives for the study tour, which are agreed upon by the trainee, his/her home institution, and the Canadian institution offering the training program; (2) program implementation, which includes finding suitable accommodations; providing an orientation to such aspects of Canadian life as banking, public transportation, and health care; making provisions for cultural needs; and establishing a welcoming and understanding environment; and (3) formative evaluation throughout the training program cycle. (EJV)

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INDIVIDUALIZING STUDY PROGRAMS FOR OVERSEAS TRAINEES

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INDIVIDUALIZING STUDY PROGRAMS FOR OVERSEAS TRAINEES

Background

This paper was presented at the national conference of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) in May of 1988. The Association provides a variety of services to its almost one-hundred and forty member colleges. These services include advocacy and professional development activities. Since 1978 ACCC through its International Bureau has provided educational development services for Third World countries. This service includes a variety of training programmes in Canada as well as comprehensive educational development services overseas. This paper was one of a series of papers presented at the ACCC annual convention and sponsored by the International Bureau to assist its members to provide better experiences for its overseas clients.

Who, Why, How, Where?

Who? Overseas trainees bring a variety of visions. For the most part we think of young people who are enrolled in regular programmes in our colleges and universities. This paper addresses the trainee coming to Canada under the sponsorship of some educational development project or an official from a Ministry of Education etc. who is visiting Canada on a feasibility study. The trainees are most often faculty who are coming for skill upgrading or skill expansion. Concomitantly most of the trainees are expected to expand their functional abilities in such areas as teaching, curriculum design or management. To a lesser degree we receive administrators and other staff from overseas educational facilities who are in Canada to develop certain administrative skills or technical skills.

Why? Why do trainees come to Canada? The major reason is to upgrade technical skills or to add a new set of skills to their repetoire. Recently a plumbing teacher from Kenya spent a year in Canada qualifying as a stationary engineer. Because many of the developing countries do not have the luxury of employing technical teachers with a lot of practical experience, upgrading programmes tend to focus heavily on practical experience or training. Although practical upgrading receives a lot of

emphasis it is balanced with theoretical training as well. Functional aspects of the teacher's work, teaching and curriculum development, complements the skill training. Other types of functional upgrading for specific staff include such areas as the use and maintenance of audio visual services, registration procedures, student services, accounting for an educational institution and professional development. For the clients who come from non-English speaking countries, English as a second lanaguage becomes an important part of a training programme.

In major development projects the long-term sustainability of a project directly relates to the effectiveness of the counterpart, a third world functionary who will assume the responsibility for the function after the termination of the project. The local counterpart(s) are a key to the long lasting results of project intervention. The training of counterparts who work closely with their Canadian partner or cooperant is a significant source of people undertaking study programmes.

How? Training programmes use a variety of methods. Classroom and workshop experiences are popular for theory and practical upgrading. Work experience provides an emphasis in practical upgrading. Where true work experience is difficult to obtain work shadowing is an alternative. Some programmes include observations or interview opportunities for the trainees. Trade shows or conferences also provide a great deal of experience in short span of time.

How long are the programmes? I can hear you all say .... "it depends on the objectives". How true. We have planned programmes for one day, one week and up to a year. Usually after one year the trainees fit into the regular student programming and special programming is only supplemental. Trainees from different countries are subject to different visa regulations. These regulations may influence the decision regarding the length of programme.

Where? Where do the training programmes occur? For the most part, ACCC or a private consulting firm sponsor these types of programmes with the implementation occuring under the auspices of a college. The

college draws upon the whole community to design a program which meets the individual learning requirements of the trainee. Many of the experiences take place in the college but much is learnt in the community. Community experiences range from visits to appropriate government resources at the federal, provincial and municipal level. Business and industry coupled with professional/trade associations are a vital component of the training experience. No accessible learning opportunity will be ignored no matter where it is located.

Considering the type of student , the variety of objectives which could be identified and the many types of learning methods, training programmes of this nature usually need to be individualized. The traditional structure of programme design - establishment of objectives, implementation and evaluation - is applicable in this situation. The rest of the paper will explore each component and identify techniques which will assist in the process.

Establishment of Objectives.

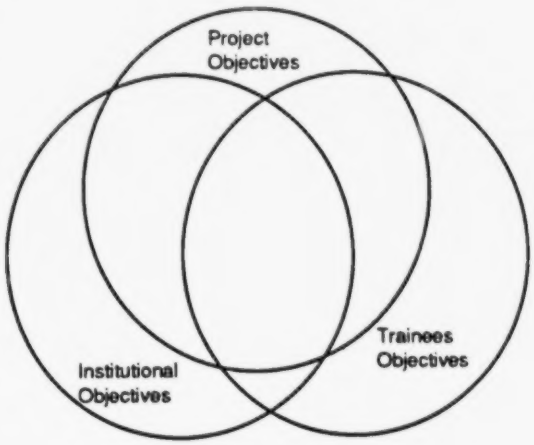
The establishment of clear objectives for the study tour is critical to the success of the programme. Each actor in the tour, the trainee, the trainee's home institution and the Canadian organizer, must all agree on the purpose of the study tour or training experience.

Resources which will assist in the needs assessment and the establishment of a mutually acceptable goals are:

(a) a description of the trainee's skills usually documented by certificates, diplomas or degrees and the trainee's experience.
(b) a statement describing the institution's expectation for the trainee.
(c) a statement outlining the trainee's personal goals for the training.

All this needs to be vetted against the funding agency's statement, usually found in the project document. It is clear that the challenge is to avoid

differences in perceptions between these three areas. The diagram below illustrates this point graphically.



Active involvement of the institution in the developing country early in the development of the project proposal increases the chance that all of the partners have a common perception of the purposes of the training programme. In this way the home institution will state its goals right from the initiation of the idea. On-site assessment will assist, particularly, if the implementing group in Canada have an opportunity to work with the trainee and the home institution in specifiying specific objectives for the training program. Usually project goals do not provide sufficient guidance to design an appropriate program because they are written long before implementation and trainee selection occurs. The specification of objectives allows for fine tuning of the ideas. The specific situation and the specific trainee'skills and experience are critical inputs when the specifc objectives are identified. Despite all this up front effort a further assessment of the training program should occur at the time of initiation. Formative evaluations throughout the experience encourages continuing fine tuning of the objectives.

Implementation

A successful needs assessment and a clear mutually-agreed-upon set of objectives provides a basis for a successful programme. The implementation phase is critical as well. Here cultural considerations are very important. In selecting the most approrpriate time of year for a trainee to arrive, we take into consideration the availability of experiences in the academic year and the climate. Culture shock is maximized when a teacher from a salubrious Caribbean island arrives in the middle of a January blizzard.

Suitable accommodation is a very important element of a successful training programme. When a trainee is here for a short time we try to find accommodation with our faculty. Assistance with activities of daily living is more readily available in this arrangement. Great professional discussions are a by-product.

An overall experiential orientation to Canadian life is critical to the effective use of learning opportunities. We find the trainee benfits from support during initial banking, a visit to the post office, the use of public transportation and eating out. We usually provide the trainee with a stamped post card to support an immediate communication back home. Information about the health care system and back-up support in case of emergencies reduce anxieties in a new environment. Trainees from certain countries are sensitive to personal safety. A discussion of this in relation to the area in which the trainee is staying is helpful. The training plan includes a geographic, economic and political overview of Canada and an interpretation of the Canadian tertiary-level education system particular emphasis on the Ontario scene.

It is critical to be sensitive to the cultural needs of our client. We should know the eating styles and food preferences of the trainee. Certainly most trainees find experiementation with our Canadian food is fun but at certain times the comfort of home food is important. Religious practices must be understood in order to ensure appropriate scheduling, facilities and food.

Another area which trainees find challenging is the pace of Canadian life. Closely related to this are the types of transportation modes we use. Speed is bewildering to many of our clients. In planning schedules we must take this into consideration. One trainee said to me that she had never walked so much in her life. In her country the heat and security considerations demand the use of cars so she always drove everywhere. She was not accustomed to using public transportation and this too caused a reaction as well.

Trainees sometimes react to "hands-on" experiences. Teachers are seen as the masters of theory and once you become educated you do not use your hands. The emphasis of mixing theory and practice so closely surprises some trainees and they find it difficult to participate fully in the practical learning experiences.

The learning styles of trainees influence the implementation plan. The individual's learning style is a factor in selecting the most effective route and method of learning. Does this trainee learn best through print, listening, observation or experience? All trainees need a mixed approach; however, certain methods may be more appropriate that others depending on the trainee. On many visits observation is a key component. The use of a structure for observation increases the effectiveness of the experience. Participatory observations often prove to be more effective that a totally passive experience.

No matter how much thought and experience goes into the development of a plan, flexibility is the rule of the day. Frequent assessments and programme adjustments are critical to the successful implementation of useful training. As approrpriate learning opportunities arise throughout the experience, they may be included in the programme.

Successful implementation also includes the orientation of the people in the College and the community who will meet the trainee. This orientation includes an initial interpretation of the programme when the visit is booked and a reiteration in the follow-up letter. One trainee very

successfully introduced her interview by explaining her own objectives to her hosts.

Continual interpretation to the college community of its commitment to international development is important to maintain a generally welcoming and understanding environment for the many trainees from overseas. The development of creative ways to reward staff for their participation in the training programmes for overseas clients will assist in maintaining an appropriate climate for welcoming trainees . Such things as recognition dinners or specific pay backs to the departments may be used. All who contribute to a training programme should receive expressions of appreciation for their contribution to the programme.

Succinct print material support for presentation is helpful. Materials requested by the trainee are a more meaningful method of identifying useful support. Assistance must be built into the project to aid the trainee with transport of materials collected during a tour. The poor trainee may have mounds of good information and no budget to take it home.

Evaluation

Formative evaluation is emphasized throughout the training programme cycle. Information obtained in review sessions require immediate consideration and adjustments to programmes should occur. The active achievement of designated objectives guides the response for programme adjustsments.

A summative evaluation is an important factor as well. We ask all trainees to keep a daily diary from which they will develop their final report. We expect the report to be completed before the trainee returns to his/her country. Time should be alotted for this activity. The faculty person working directly with the trainee in the skill upgrading or training component provides an essential input to the process. In addition to the report we use a rating sheet which provides the trainee an opportunity to

react to the total experience.

When a training program is part of a larger project other evaluative opportunities are provided in the general monitoring of the project. For example, trainees may be interviewed on a regular basis after the completion of the training program. Data from the trainee's academic administrator will provide additional information on the value of the experience. Formal project review and project evaluation processes will provide further sources of information.

In conclusion, the provision of programmes for trainees from overseas provides a challenging experience in human resource development. With the recognition that the human dimension is critical in development activities for Third World countries, the selective use of training programmes in developed countries can be a useful development tool provided specific objectives are developed based on a needs assessment considering the trainee, the trainee's institution and project management requirments. Success also depends on a careful and flexible implementation considering cultural and learning style factors. Formative and summative evaluation are further essential elements.

This paper was prepared on the basis of a workshop presented at the Association of Canadian Community Colleges conference, May,1988, St. John, New Brunswick, Canada.

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